

Ergonomics demonstration project: Lumberyards

Need

While not among the top 12 industries, lumberyards do have a fairly high rate and number of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs) and several known risk factors for injury. Much of the exposure at lumberyards comes from heavy, frequent and awkward lifting while helping customers load lumber, cement, and other heavy materials. Lumberyards also employ drivers who must deliver large, heavy items such as doors, windows, and cabinets to construction sites.

Lumberyards combine the elements of a retail environment, warehouse, and delivery trucking in a single company. The results of a demonstration project with the Lumbermen's Building Center will apply to a number of industries, as well as lumber dealers throughout the state.

Goals

The goals of this demonstration project are to show that a lumber dealer can:

- Identify caution zone jobs in lumberyards.
- Provide awareness education to employees in caution zone jobs and their supervisors.
- Work with employees to identify WMSD hazards in these jobs and identify feasible controls.
- Implement controls and evaluate their effectiveness at reducing the hazards.

Project design

Lumbermen's had already begun identifying caution zone jobs and evaluating for hazards before the Department of Labor and Industries became involved. Cataloging the weight and location of the heavier objects that are lifted will identify likely hazards. The project will estimate the frequency of handling through sales records and simple probabilities. Representative sampling will include analysis of the tallest and shortest employees to determine the effects of stature on posture. Jobs will be analyzed at several different locations to make sure that results of the analysis can be applied chain-wide.

The company will provide their staff with the necessary awareness education by customizing materials available from L&I. Control identification (and development if necessary) will focus on low-cost solutions. Controls will be tested at one location before being implemented chain-wide. L&I staff will assist with hazard and control identification as necessary.

Timetable

August 2001Begin project
September 2001Begin hazard analysis
January 2002Identify and test best practices
April 2002.....Complete project

Results

This project will result in the following products:

- A list of caution zone jobs and hazards in lumberyards.
- Examples of controls that can be used to reduce hazards.
- A description of the process used to identify hazards and controls.
- An example of a company-specific adaptation of a model education program.

The results will be shared by the company with a national association of lumber dealers, and L&I will also post them on the web site so that other industries can learn from them. Controls will also be included in a searchable database on the L&I web site.